Cross Cascades Corridor Analysis Project
Strategic Communications Plan

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the Cross Cascades Corridor Analysis Strategic Communications Plan (SCP) is to provide a set of common assumptions and operating principles to guide the project's outreach and communication program. The strategic communications task is intended to provide a cost and time-effective outreach and involvement plan, and will serve as a template for future corridor analysis projects. Specific elements of the SCP include:

- Objectives
- Approach to outreach and involvement
- Roles of project participants
- Identification of individuals and groups potentially interested in project
- Issue identification and key messages

Approach to Stakeholder Outreach and Involvement

Guiding Principles

The following principles should guide the project's strategic communication efforts:

- **Effectiveness, time and cost-efficiency**. With limited time and budget to accomplish the project's objectives, strategic communication efforts should be designed and targeted to achieve the greatest exposure and understanding possible within the limitations of the project budget.
- **Build on existing committees, meetings and communication mechanisms**. WSDOT has several established forums and communication channels for discussing statewide planning issues. To be time and cost-effective, these mechanisms should be used, rather than establishing new committees or groups.
- **Assume a busy audience and target communications as appropriate.** Evaluate possible communication tools, and be as direct and targeted as possible. In some cases individual meetings may be needed; in other cases a targeted e-mail may be appropriate.
- **"Informed consent" is the operative principle**. The project team needs to share information, obtain feedback and buyoff at key decision points, and provide additional, low-cost opportunities for interested parties to learn more about the project and provide input.
- **Assume that issues and concerns will arise, and take a flexible approach to resolving them**. Even with an excellent communication plan, unexpected issues will arise given the "first time" nature of the project, its importance to the state and the region, and the complexity of the technical and implementation issues. When issues and concern do arise, the project team will work to understand, address and resolve them. This will be accomplished by obtaining information sufficient to understand and identify the key issues, discussing the issues with the appropriate parties, and establishing a plan or list of action items to address the issues.

- **Coordinate with Washington Transportation Plan (WTP) plans and policies**. It is understood that this project will not be incorporated in the WTP update currently underway; it will be part of future updates of the Plan. Because it will become part of the WTP, it is important for WTP staff and coordinators to stay abreast of the project at key milestones.
- **Develop a project logo and identity**. This identity should clarify the project's intent, and distinguish it from other WSDOT and regional initiatives.
- **Communicate all technical information in a clear, concise manner**. The audience for the project is comprised of both technical and policy stakeholders, and the findings, conclusions and outcomes of the effort should be conveyed in a way that can be understood by all.
- **Evaluate strategic communication efforts at the project's conclusion**, to obtain "lessons learned" for future projects.
- **Serve as a model communications plan for future statewide corridor analyses.**

Audience Definition

A first step in developing an effective communication plan is to identify individuals and groups with potential interest in the project. The Cross Cascades chartering meeting identified the project's audience as including technical and modeling colleagues from various agencies, other interested parties including policy stakeholders from WSDOT, and related transportation agencies.

The technical interest group includes: WSDOT modal staff (Rail, Public Transportation, Ferries, Freight/Economic Partnerships, Aviation Division); MPO/RTPO modelers; WSDOT region technical planning staff; and associated modeling experts from related economic groups.

Policy stakeholders identified were: Transportation Commissioners, senior WSDOT managers, senior MPO/RTPO managers, a representative from the Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board (FMSIB), representatives from the Puget Sound port districts, the Washington Public Ports Association, the BNSF railroad and the Mountains to Sound Greenway.

Communication Mechanisms

Four communication mechanisms will be used in this project, as described below:

1. **Initial Policy Briefings**. At the outset of the project, WSDOT staff met individually with key stakeholders across the state. The meetings encompassed MPO/RTPOs and WSDOT regions, and resulted in useful information and perspectives on project implementation. Information received from the meetings included:

   - A need to keep partners apprised of progress, even when some are too busy to attend meetings;
   - Requests for significant lead time for information requests;
   - Additional names of interested groups and individuals to involve – particularly those involved in major regional transportation planning projects;
   - Requests to send the project's annotated bibliography for review and input;
   - Concerns about data availability and modal compatibility; and
   - Requests for effective communication regarding the project.

To facilitate further input and involvement from around the state, project staff will:

- Offer telephone and video conferencing as an option at project meetings;
- Explore the option of holding project meetings in Eastern Washington;
- Continue ongoing communication with interested colleagues and groups through the methods described below; and
- Offer travel subsidies to selected technical experts when meeting attendance involves cross-state travel.

2. **Briefings of Existing RTPO and WTP groups.** Four existing groups have been identified as needing project briefings:

- **MPO/RTPO Coordination Meetings**. This group is comprised of about 40 representatives from the RTPOs/MPOs across the state, and the WSDOT regional planning managers. The Committee met on January 31, 2001 and received a summary briefing on project objectives, schedule, milestones and relationship to the WTP. The Committee will meet again in late April or May 2001 and will receive a second Cross Cascades project briefing.
- **WTP Regional Coordinators**. This group has regularly scheduled weekly conference calls; WSDOT's project manager will coordinate and be responsible for briefing the group at key project milestones.
- **WTP Advisory Team**. This staff group is comprised of WSDOT modal and MPO/RTPO and modal representatives. The group meets monthly and WSDOT's project manager will be responsible for briefings on project status and issues. This group should provide input based on their interests and perspectives.
- **WTP Executive Guidance Committee**. This Committee is comprised of WSDOT executives and typically meets monthly. They should be briefed on the project at the conclusion of Phases I and II (Note: this group's function and role is currently being re-evaluated).

3. **Internet Website for Project**. An important component of the SCP is the development and maintenance of a project website, located on the Transportation Planning Office's internet site. This website provides an effective means of sharing project information and status updates with all stakeholders and interested individuals, and provides a forum for questions and comments from users of the site. Elements of the website are:

- Home page, welcome and introduction to the project
- Short summary of the project
- Timeline
- Map of project area
- Public input and comment form – an invitation to email comments and questions about the project
- Materials from key meetings, i.e. peer review panel meeting summary
- Technical workshop summaries or materials
- Frequently asked questions and answers
- Technical findings and reports
- E-newsletter

4.   **E-newsletter for Project**. The project's emailed newsletter is a Word document that will be sent to all project stakeholders. It is designed to be graphic and easy to read (two pages) and will allow the project team to quickly convey pertinent information on project status and actions. Its recipients have the option of forwarding it on electronically to others in their organization, and/or printing it and distributing it as a paper newsletter. All of these options provide a relatively quick and straight forward method of conveying information to interested stakeholders, thereby increasing the scope and range of project communication efforts.

The newsletter will be created by the consultant team; WSDOT staff will assemble the email roster and send the document to stakeholders. Three issues of the newsletter will be prepared and organized around the project's milestones:

- Phase I project initiation, scope, schedule, products (February)
- Model development (April)
- Phase II analysis (June)

Issue Identification and Key Messages

Throughout the project, the team will work on creating and refining the key messages emerging from the project. The objective of this effort is to clearly communicate the project's issues, options and conclusions to all the audiences involved. Key messages and strategic themes identified to date are:

- **Why are we doing the Cross-Cascades Corridor Analysis Project?** TEA-21 requires states and MPOs to conduct planning, modeling and other analyses, and MPOs have made great progress toward completing corridor and sub-area analysis and building travel forecast models for their urban areas. The Cross-Cascades Corridor Analysis project takes the first step in developing a forecast tool to help WSDOT fill the gap between the urban area models and improve planning methods, enabling WSDOT to better meet federal requirements.

- **What the Project Is and What it Isn't.** The intent of the project is to forecast and analyze multi-modal travel growth and operations in the I-90, SR-2, BNSF and airway corridor. The project will develop methodologies for determining the long-range transportation needs for the full length of the corridor, to facilitate efficient movement of commercial goods and passengers in the corridor, and to help provide external trip data for use in urban models.

- **The Model has Multiple Elements.** The multi-modal travel demand model will enable the State to estimate travel today and in the future. The elements include:
  - A spatial input/output model will identify economic relationships between origins and destinations in the corridor.
  - The MEPLAN software will be used to assess the relationship between current and future economic conditions and the resulting trip generation, modal split, distribution, and assignment associated with those conditions.

- The model will evaluate trip origins and destinations throughout Washington State, as well as in multiple zones external to the State, including overseas zones.
- Trip making can be estimated in three-year intervals, between 1998 and 2021.

- **The Model will be used to Evaluate Future Scenarios.** The model will be used to test multiple policy scenarios to determine how corridor transportation system changes may affect mode choice, route choice, and travel time performance. A benefit of the model for MPO planning will be to provide a greater degree of accuracy in the estimation of "external" trips as they pass through the metropolitan areas along the corridor.

- **The Model is an Important First Step.** This project represents an important first step in the development of a statewide forecasting model, and with further improvement can be an important tool in assessing investment choices in our intercity travel corridors.

- **How the Project Relates to other Projects.** This project is one of – and distinct from – several significant on-going WSDOT technical analysis efforts. The others are:

  - Travel Delay Methodology – development of the State's congestion relief performance measures
  - Multi-modal Investment Choice Analysis – development of a multi-modal programming prioritization tool
  - WTP - the project will be incorporated into future WTP updates

- **Three Products will be Produced – All Electronically.** The following products will be available on the project web site at the project's conclusion:
  - Executive Summary
  - Concise User's Manual
  - Model Documentation

Recommendations for Strategic Communications Efforts on Future Statewide Corridor Analysis Projects

The Cross Cascades Analysis project has been a pilot project, intended to serve as a template or model for future statewide corridor studies. Although each new project will be different – with different organizations and individuals involved, different issues and sensitivities, and each will require individualized communication strategy and plans – nonetheless, several recommendations for future projects can be made based on the Cross-Cascades experience:

1. Identify the range of organizations and individuals that may be interested in the project, and design communications approaches that will allow for meaningful input and involvement as the project progresses. The statewide corridor plan will need to directly engage these

interested individuals and organizations in order for them to have ownership in the plan's development.

2. Within the corridor, there may be numerous regional plans, and these will need to be carefully considered. The relationship between existing regional plans and a new statewide plan is a central issue for many project stakeholders.

3. Communications mechanisms should include policy briefings for key individuals and existing organizations, creation and use of a project website, and use of e-mail and e-newsletters.

4. Assume that issues and concerns will arise, and design and schedule meetings to allow for face-to-face discussion and resolution of those issues.

5. Development of a comprehensive e-mail list for communicating with interested persons is a time-consuming but extremely useful task. The Cross Cascades project developed such a list, included in Attachment A to this Plan, and it is recommended that this list be periodically updated and maintained. It can then serve as a starting point for development of new lists for future projects.

Attachment A: Interest Group Roster

Model Development/Technical Interest Group

Todd Carlson, WSDOT – Transportation Planning Office

Faris Al-Memar, WSDOT – Transportation Planning Office

Nancy Boyd, WSDOT – Transportation Planning Office

Bill Bennett, WSDOT – Eastern Region

Germaine Beveridge, Yakima Valley Conference of Government

Larry Blaine, Puget Sound Regional Council

Daniela Bremmer-Washington, WSDOT– Transportation Planning Office

Dave Bushnell, WSDOT – Data Office

Mark Charnews, Puget Sound Regional Council

Klara A. Fabry, WSDOT – Northwest Region

Kirk Fredickson, WSDOT – Public Transportation and Rail

Paul Gamble, WSDOT – Public Transportation and Rail

Miguel Gavino, WSDOT – Office of Urban Mobility

Jim Geringer, WSDOT– Transportation Planning Office

Celine Gihring, WSDOT – Washington State Ferries

Ed Hayes, Spokane Regional Transportation Council

Shannon Amidon, Spokane Regional Transportation Council

Todd Herreid, WSDOT - Economics

Dave Honsinger, WSDOT – North Central Region

Rick Judd, WSDOT – Program Management Office

Shinwon Kim, Regional Transportation Council

Dawn McIntosh, WSDOT – Northwest Region

Glenn Miles, Spokane Regional Transportation Council

Bill Osterhout, WSDOT – Transportation Planning Office

Paula Reeves, WSDOT – Transportation Demand Management

Jin Ren, Thurston County Regional Council

Elizabeth Robbins, WSDOT – Highways and Local Programs

Mark Rohwer, WSDOT – Eastern Region

Scott Rutherford, University of Washington

Steve Smith, State of Washington – Department of Revenue

Troy Suing, WSDOT – South Central Region

Gary Westby, WSDOT – Southwest Region

Katherine Klockenteger, WSDOT – Transportation Planning Office

Ralph Wilhelmi, WSDOT – Transportation Planning Office

Shuming Yan, WSDOT – Olympic Region

WSDOT/MPO/RTPO Coordinating Committee
(excluding Model Development Interest Group)

Stan Allison, WSDOT - Aviation

Mark Andreini, WSDOT – North Central Region

Jay Armstrong, Country Road Administration Board

Amy Arnis, WSDOT – Finance and Administration

Jerry Ayres, WSDOT – Public Transportation and Rail

Bill Bennett, WSDOT – Eastern Region

Harry Bennetts, Federal Highway Administration

Jennifer Bowman, Federal Transit Authority

King Cushman, Puget Sound Regional Council

Kathleen Davis, WSDOT – Program Management Office

Ray Deardorf, WSDOT – Washington State Ferries

Phil Dorn, Peninsula Regional Transportation Organization

Mike Dornfeld, WSDOT – Bicycle and Pedestrian

John Doyle, WSDOT – Planning and Programming

Rob Fellows, WSDOT – Northwest Region

Phil Fordyce, WSDOT – Northwest Region

Mike Frucci, WSDOT – Eastern Region

Linda Gehrke, Federal Transit Authority

Bart Gernhart, WSDOT – Southwest Region

Don Griffith, WSDOT – Governmental Liaison

Randy Hain, WSDOT – Olympic Region

Tom Hanson, WSDOT - Research

Alan Harger, Transportation Economic Partnership

Steve Harvey, Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments

Jamie Haveri, WSDOT – Organizational Development Services

Dave Heilman, Grant County Public Works

Eric Irelan, Skagit County Conference of Governments

Paul Johnson, WSDOT – Northwest Region

Bob Jones, WSDOT – Olympic Region

Dave Keeley, Northeast Washington Regional Transportation Organization

Helena Kennedy-Smith, WSDOT – Office of Urban Mobility

Al King, WSDOT – Highways and Local Programs

Mark Kushner, Benton-Franklin Council of Governments

J. Law, Peninsula Regional Transportation Planning Organization

Mary Legry, WSDOT – Southwest Region

Jerry Lenzi, WSDOT – Eastern Region

Dean Lookingbill, Regional Transportation Council

Judy Lorenzo, WSDOT – Highways and Local Programs

Julie Matlick, WSDOT – Highways and Local Programs

Mary McCumber, Puget Sound Regional Council

Omar Mehyar, Transportation Improvement Board

Vern Mickelsen, Federal Highway Administration

Jim Miller, Whatcom Council of Governments

Lee Ann Mills, WSDOT – Planning and Programming

Shelley Moore, Transportation Commission

Pat Morin, WSDOT – Program Management

Mike Morton, Island County

John Okamoto, WSDOT

Leni Oman, WSDOT – Environmental Affairs Office

Chris Picard, WSDOT – Office of Urban Mobility

Leonard Pittman, WSDOT – South Central Region

Gwen Rasmussen, Benton-Franklin Council of Governments

Nicole Ribreau, WSDOT – Environmental Office

Valerie Rodman, WSDOT – Public Transportation and Rail

Gordon Rogers, Whatcom Council of Governments

Chris Rose, Transportation Commission

Shari Schaftlein, WSDOT – Environmental Office

Don Senn, WSDOT – North Central Region

Jerry Schultz, WSDOT – Northwest Region

Don Skone, Yakima Valley Conference of Governments

Rosemary Siipola, Cowlitz-Wahkiakhum Council of Governments

Cathy Silins, WSDOT – Public Transportation and Rail

James Slakey, WSDOT – Public Transportation and Rail

Theresa Smith, WSDOT – Aviation Planning

Nytasha Sowers, WSDOT – Office of Urban Mobility

Sid Stecker, FHWA

Craig Stone, WSDOT – Northwest Region

Maureen Sullivan, WSDOT – Northwest Region

Scott Taylor, Washington Public Ports Association

Jack Thompson, Palouse Economic Development Council

James Toohey, WSDOT – Planning and Programming

Todd Trepanier, WSDOT – South Central Region

Ken Uznanski, WSDOT – Public Transportation and Rail

Don Wagner, WSDOT – South Central Region

Paul Wagner, WSDOT – Environmental Office

Deb Wallace, WSDOT – Southwest Region

Larry Weldon, WSDOT – Public Transportation and Rail

Jeff Wilkens, WSDOT – Southwest Region

Lon Wyrick, Thurston County

Martin Wold, Northeast Washington Regional Transportation Organization

Dave Zevenbergen, WSDOT – Highways and Local Programs

Renee Zimmerman, WSDOT – Northwest Region

Other Stakeholders

Commissioner Ed Barnes, Transportation Commission

Jeannie Beckett, Port of Tacoma

David Bierschbach, WSDOT – North Central Region

Ken Casavant, Washington State University

Paul Chilcote, Port of Tacoma

Dick Conway, Dick Conway Associates

Commissioner Aubrey Davis, Transportation Commission

Dave Dye, WSDOT – Northwest Region

Commissioner Elmira Forner, Transportation Commission

Rick Galloway, Kalispel Tribe

Paula Hammond, WSDOT – Highways and Local Programs

Stephanie Jones, Port of Seattle – Seaport

Commissioner George Kargianis, Transportation Commission

Nancy Keith, Mountains to Sound Greenway

Steve Kim, WSDOT – Olympic Region

Casey Liles, WSDOT – Southwest Region

Ta-Win Lin, Office of Financial Management

Clarissa Lundeen, WSDOT – Communications

Commissioner A. Michèle Maher, Transportation Commission

Commissioner Chris Marr, Transportation Commission

Christina Martinez, WSDOT – Environmental Affairs Office

Eric Meale, WSDOT - Economics

Jim Miller, Whatcom Council of Governments

Helga Morgenstern, WSDOT – Finance and Administration Services

Dohee Nam, WSDOT – Northwest Region

Don Nelson, WSDOT – Planning and Programming

Debra Niemeier, University of California at Davis (Peer Review Panel)

John Nisbett, WSDOT – Olympic Region

Commissioner Connie Niva, Transportation Commission

Patricia Otley, Burlington Northern Santa Fe

Ed Paskovskis, Port of Everett

Sandra Pedigo-Marshall, WSDOT – Traffic Operations

Becky Ray, Colville Tribe

Richard Rolland, Eastern Washington University

Karen Schmidt, Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board

Glen Schneider, WSDOT – Southwest Region

Suzanne Sergeant, WSDOT – Budget Office

Paul Waddell, University of Washington

Jude Willcher, Thurston County

David Williams, WSDOT – Northwest Region

Khatib Zaher, University of Idaho